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NARRATOR Wayne Miller

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Historical Museum

DATE June 27, 1982

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Interview with A. Wayne Miller
Date of Interview: 27 June 1982
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: Introduction. Mr. Miller, of Ventura, was a long time resident of Santa Ynez, one of the five towns of the Santa Ynez Valley. He is here at the Historical Museum today to talk with me about the town.

Mr. Miller, were there a lot of saloons along Sagunto Street?

Mr.M: As far back as I can remember the College Hotel had a bar, and right across the street this way there was a bar in the Tom Daniels place, and Joe Brown had a saloon called the Ivy. The Santa Ynez Hotel had a bar. In later years a fellow named Pertaga had a saloon, he sold out to Bray and Fields. They go back to the late 90's. You see they done a lot of farming here in this valley, raised a lot of grain. The McMurry boys, my cousins had two stationary outfits,and the Donahue boys had a thrashing machine and the Prestons had one too. On Sundays I saw many a fight here on the street (Sagunto). There was gambling sometimes in the old Bray and Fields saloon. They would have a game going for a week, day and night. Poker and other card games. They could not do it now. When a gambler would get tired, wanted to sleep or eat, they would leave everything, money, cards right there, tip the chair over the table and no one

would take it, it would be there when he came back to play.

PL: Did they loose their whole weeks pay?

Mr. M: Oh Yeh! Those boys would be pretty drunk some times. Some of these fellows would come in, professional gamblers. There was an Indian here named Frank Estrada, and thats the way he made a living. He had only one arm, boy, he could shuffle them cards! I would loan him five dollars many a time and he always paid me back. Several of those Indians used to borrow money, never over five dollars and they always paid me back. It might be a year or so but they paid back.

PL: A man came into the museum and showed me a token in the shape of a dice. Would you know anything about that?

Mr. M: The dice games? They had several of those, High Man Out, and so on. Regular dice, Rassle-Dazzle, You Shake, and High Point. It has been a long time since I played these games. When something did not go right(with the cards), you'd say,"Thats a horse on me!" Those dice games were not for gambling, just for drinks.

PL: The men worked (on the thrashing machines) all day Saturdays too?

Mr. M: Yes, it was a six day week with Sundays off. They would come in (to town) Saturday night by by Sunday morning some (of th men) had passed out already. Most were not so bad. I fired on (man) one year. The whistle blowed at four o'clock in the morning and it did not blow again

until eight that night. Hard work. They would stop at ten in the morning and the Chinese cook would come out with a big dishpan full of sandwiches and a big pot of coffee. We went to the cook house for dinner and you were lucky if you got to bed by ten. You had to clean the flues, blow the boiler down and had to keep the steam up all night.

PL: Where did you get the water for the machine?

Mr. M: They had a water tank pulled by 8 horses. Sometimes they got the water from a well and other times they went to the river. I used to help do that when my uncle drove the water team. H used to drive in the river where it was deep, drop the hose in there and hand pump the water up.

PL: How much money did you make, your wage?

Mr. M: I made $2.50 a day and I was 14 years old, pretty good for then. I always gave my mother the money. Money never bothered me much. What I did not have I did not spend. I had good credit.

PL: What other work did you do?

Mr. M: I used to drive plow teams, just anything. When I was very young, I used to spade up lots for people and get 25 cents for all day. I started working on the ranches when I was 12 years old. I worked on all of them, the first (job) was over on the Mitchell which was then the Mahony Ranch. I worked there at 14, they had cattle and farmed too. I worked at the Alisal for Lonny (Alonzo)

Crabb and the last time I worked there it was for Bill Thompson. A man by the name of Mead owned the Alisal. I worked at the San Marcos (Ranch) in 1907, I was 20 years old. Mead owned it or the bank. When I went to work there a group owned the place, one of these men was George Rowe. They called it the San Marcos Cattle Company. Then a German outfit from Pt. Hueneme bought them out and it was said that they bought all the cowboys too, to work the ranch. I worked the ranches from 1907 to 1922, off and on. On the San Maracos they had one little cabin and the old ranch house that is down town now with one or two rooms. There was not much there. Part of the old Asistencia, a chapel for the people fo the ranch was still there, a part of it but I don't know what has happened to it today. Some place in San Diego in a hotel there is a picture of it. (note: this picture Mr. Miller talks about is a painting of the Asistencia and was said to be at the Mission Inn, Riverside, CA.) Mr. Riley, he was superintendent of the ranch when I worked there the last time, he told me about it. The San Marcos Mission, they called it. His daughter might know. Elisa Riley, do you know her? After I got my chest hurt, the horse fell in a ditch, the saddle horn hit me in the chest. We were trying to catch some wild cattle and the horse stepped into a ditch and became scared. Tom Ontiveros and I slept near each other on the ground. He helped me. Ramon Lomas

and I took our saddle blankets down to the creek to wash them out and I passed out again, I could have drowned but Ramon grabbled hold of me, the water was deep. I then decided to go to the ranch and they told me to go to the doctor, Dr. Smith, in Solvang. He thought I had pneumonia and told me to go home to my mothers. I went back as far as the druggist in Santa Ynez and had a few drinks with him and then I said I had to get back to the ranch to shoe some horses. The doctor went to my mothers and I was not there, he told her I was a very sick boy. She got scared but no one was there (at the ranch), I had gone back to the vaqueros camp. Then I began to hemorrhage. I took medicine and just laid around and cured myself.

At this point in the interview, Mike Shidler from Lompoc came into the room to talk with Mr. Miller. Mike shows the token to Mr. Miller but Mr. Miller say he has never seem that token before.

Mr M: They had a game in the pool hall but this I don't know about. There was a man who could make a dollar come up heads or tail as he wanted and he took a lot of fellows for their money that way.

PL: Where did you go after working on the ranches?

Mr. M: I went to Ventura. My mother had moved down there. There was a stage coach driver who drove the stage by Naples, Dos Pueblos Ranch now. He drove into the creek

when it was high, stage and everything went down and one or two fellows were drowned. I didn't know his name (the stage driver). I was there that day, my uncle and aunt on one side (of the family) lived there and an aunt and uncle on the other side (of the family) lived there too. They were all watching. There was a foot bridge and why they didn't get out (of the stage) and go across the foot bridge I don't know. My folks saw it (the accident). My brother and I used to patrol there looking for this one man who drown. The only way to get through this swollen creek and the driver left it up to the passengers to decide and they said go ahead. The stage was going to Santa Barbara from Gaviota.

PL: Did you know a man (from this Santa Ynez area) named Bert Beers?

Mr. M: He had cattle, my brother worked for him. I was in the Army at that time.

I was in the Army but I didn't do any fighting. Mr. Beers had a partner named Bobby Burns. Other than that I don't know much about him. They lived in Happy Canyon. They didn't have many cattle, only 200-300.

I worked for the Vail Cattle Co., before I went into the Army. They had the old Mahoney Ranch. Rented it and part of the Zaca Ranch. When the cattle sold I went with the cattle. The fellow that bought the cattle hired me to go over on the desert and I was there for awhile in a line camp all alone not seeing anyone for a

month, just watched the cattle. I got my draft notice there. There was one camp, a kind of headquarters and the mail came in and was left in a cigar box on the table of this headquarters but when I was there I had not looked in for any mail. But later on the cook looked and found this notice about me, he brought the letter, a telegram. It was late getting to me, a week or two. Then I found out they were looking for me, I signed up and was in a little less than a year, 1918. We were on the water in the boat but they turned us back as it was Nov. 1918. I didn't like the big cities, cold and dark, no moon or stars.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

Mr. M: I went to school in Ballard, there was a little store and post office. The Lyons lived on the hill, and the Barnes were there, the Stewarts, more Barnes, Shanklins and that was about it. Across the creek there were the Snyders, Muncton, he had a shop there as there was an old water wheel. The road went across the creek and it was steep there. J.J. Hobson had a thrashing machine. I went one term at Ballard about 1900 or 01. Jeannette (Lyons) was going to high school and rode to school on a bicycle, I used to meet her at the same place every

monring. We were the same age,(born in 1886) but I was far behind her in school. I was staying with one of my aunts, she lived over there near Grand Ave in Los Olivos and I walked to school. There were only 8 or 10 students and Grace Lyons was my teacher. I didn't go on to high school.

PL: What year was the drought so bad?

Mr. M: 1898 or 9. We lived out east of town on the Santa Agueda Creek and there was a spring there. I remember the willows grew 3 or 4 feet high and the cattle came in and ate them to the ground. The cattlemen cut down the big white oak trees so the cattle could eat the leaves. They took most of the cattle out of the valley. Those that could afford to took them out. Some of them went to Mendocino County. I guess some of the men went broke. Even the sheep men left and the coyotes over ran the area. They lived on squirrels.

PL: Did you know the Buells?

Mr. M: I knew them all, R.T. He was a big noise, he was cheap. He didn't pay hardly anything, had young kids working for him, renegades. He was quite a character. He used to have a horse and cart and would drive around the ranch, and would always take one of his kids along to open the gates. None of them wanted to go. They had a wooden water tank that had been left unfilled. Rufus, Glenn, Odin, Walter and Linus's boy, Frank were there and old R.T. came up there. The boys saw their dad

coming so the got into the tank, all except Frank, and R.T. asked where his boys were and Frank said he did not know. R.t. asked if there was any water in the tank and started to fill it. Those kids stayed in there as long as they could, Walter was the littlest, and by the time the water came up to their chins they came out and R.T. took Rufus along to open the gates for him. Rufus was like the old man. I came back to Santa Ynez after the war. I would not have missed it (the war) but I would not have wanted to go through that again. They trained you all day, no fooling around. You take a person who has been on a horse for years and put him on his feet, my legs got so tired with those flat heels, I felt as though I was walking backward all the time. After coming back here after the war I went to work on the Zaca Ranch. I had gone to visit but stayed and worked for awhile. Then I worked for the Brinkerhoff Ranch, worked with an old miner digging a water tunnel. The Zaca Ranch was owned part by a bank and part by Canfield. My uncle, Ezra Fields managed the ranch. A line used to come though one of the barns (property line) and Canfield decided ..so many feet on the north side so the correls and barn would be on this side, one is Zaca Ranch and the other was Corral de Quati. At the new line there was a big oak tree right in the middle of the new line. They staked it off and my cousin and I were digging post holes when we saw Judge Canfield

walking around and around this oak tree. stand off and and look at it again, then he came up to talk with us and wanted to know if my cousin, Bill was going on that side of the tree or this side. We told him we tacked the wires around the tree so that the wire would be right in the middle of the tree. He scratched his head and then walked away. My cousin was Bill Fields. The Fields ranched for years on College Ranch and then moved to the Zaca Ranch. Were there more than 20 years. One of them frog-eaters got away with my ring! I used go with one of the girls (the Libeu girls). they lived at Zaca Lake and I worked at the Zaca Ranch. Sometimes on a Saturday night I'd go up and spend Sunday there. The one (girtl) I was interested in was Rosadell. They were quite a family. Annie, Rosadell, Eulalie, and the other two were smaller. Mrs. Libeu was a very good cook. She worked very hard. John (Libeu) would get the wagon and go to the bottom of the hill and pick up Sunday guests. They had a telephone at the foot of the grade and the guests would call and John would drive down to get them. 25 cents to take them up. Maudie Fields and I went up in a cart one time. Those Libeu kids used to come down in a wagon and team. Rosadell wanted to wear my ring, she had a little diamond ring that she had won from a punch board, she gave me it in exzchange for my expensive ring. And that was the last time I ever saw the ring. We used to go frog fishing around the lake.

They would walk into the water up to their necks and grab the frogs. They had long bamboo poles and would put pieces of red cloth on the tip of the pole and the frogs would grab at it. Some of the frogs legs were as big as a drum stick on a chicken. I called them frog eaters. Joe Libeu's wife was Los Olivos Post mistress, she was a school teacher and taught on the Manzana when Joe was a ranger over there. They had a boy or two. The Tunnels had a place there on the Manzana at one time with a big barn. They never raised enough hay to fill it. I think they let it go back to the Sisquoc Ranch. There used to be a grape vinyard there and John Libeu used to keep it up so he got the grapes to make his wine. He was up there one time and he got to teasing some of the kids, John Cararraburu and I went down to the cellar and they had to help us out of there.

PL: Do you know what happened to his face(John Cararraburu)?

Mr. M: I was working up there on the Zaca Ranch, he and John went out looking for hogs and they were going along the side of a hill, no trail and the oak leaves were slick and his horse slipped and fell down. John C. put his foot on the upper side, they were half soled boots and the half sole caught in the stirrup, the horse kicked and cut his nose clear down. Two or three boys from the ranch and Maud (Fields) went up in the car and brought him down, put bandages on his face. The doctor sewed

his face and nose together.

PL: Thank you, Mr. Miller for this interview today.